

## ***A Living Sacrifice***

As one reads through the book of Romans, there are many wonderful and glorious truths. In the beginning of the letter Paul lays out the theme, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:16-17). He proceeds to show the need for the gospel not only among the gentiles but also among the Jews. He shows the need for grace, chapters 3-4; faith in Christ, chapter 5; baptism, chapter 6; the removal of the Old Law, chapter 7; and for living by the spirit, chapter 8. In chapters 9-11 he reveals the plan God has for the children of Israel in this new law and this brings us the chapter 12.

Chapter 12 begins the application section of Paul’s letter. He has shown the problems and the principles that need to be applied, and now the time has come to apply these things directly. It states, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:1-2). The word *“beseech”* is defined to mean, *“To ask or entreat with urgency; to supplicate; to implore”* (Webster). The things that Paul asks of us in these verses are to be done with a sense of urgency. These things are not suggestions or commands to be done when *“we get around to it.”* These things are of the utmost importance!

The word *“present”* that is used was commonly used as a technical term for a priest’s placing an offering on the altar. It carried with it the idea of completely surrendering the sacrifice. Our bodies are to be presented to God, *“holy, acceptable to God.”* We are to completely surrender our bodies to be put to the master’s use. This use is not to be judged by our standards. The Corinthians were told that it was not acceptable for them to be *“measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves”* (II Corinthians 10:12). If we are not careful, our service to God becomes judged by our lack of service previous to what we’re doing now or the lack of service of others. Jesus asked His disciples,

*“Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, Come immediately and sit down to eat? But will he not say to him, Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.”*

When we do the things commanded of us, such as presenting our bodies in service to God, we still have not earned anything from God. We are His servants and what He

commands us to do, we do it without grumbling or asking for immediate gratification. As we make our lives a *“living sacrifice holy, acceptable to God,”* we also realize that this is our *“reasonable service.”* It is not “too much” for God to ask us to dedicate our lives in His service. When He told the rich young ruler, *“If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me,”* (Matthew 19:21) it was not too much to ask. The young man had many possessions, but for him to truly follow God he had to leave all of these things behind.

In order to completely surrender our bodies to God, there must not be anything in our way. Jesus taught, *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?”* (Luke 9:23-25). This is not limited to our possessions, but extends to everything in our lives: family, friends, and even ourselves!

James informs us all that, *“If any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing”* (James 1:23-25). May we all be humble enough and committed enough to God and our own salvation enough that we may continue to examine ourselves in the word of God.